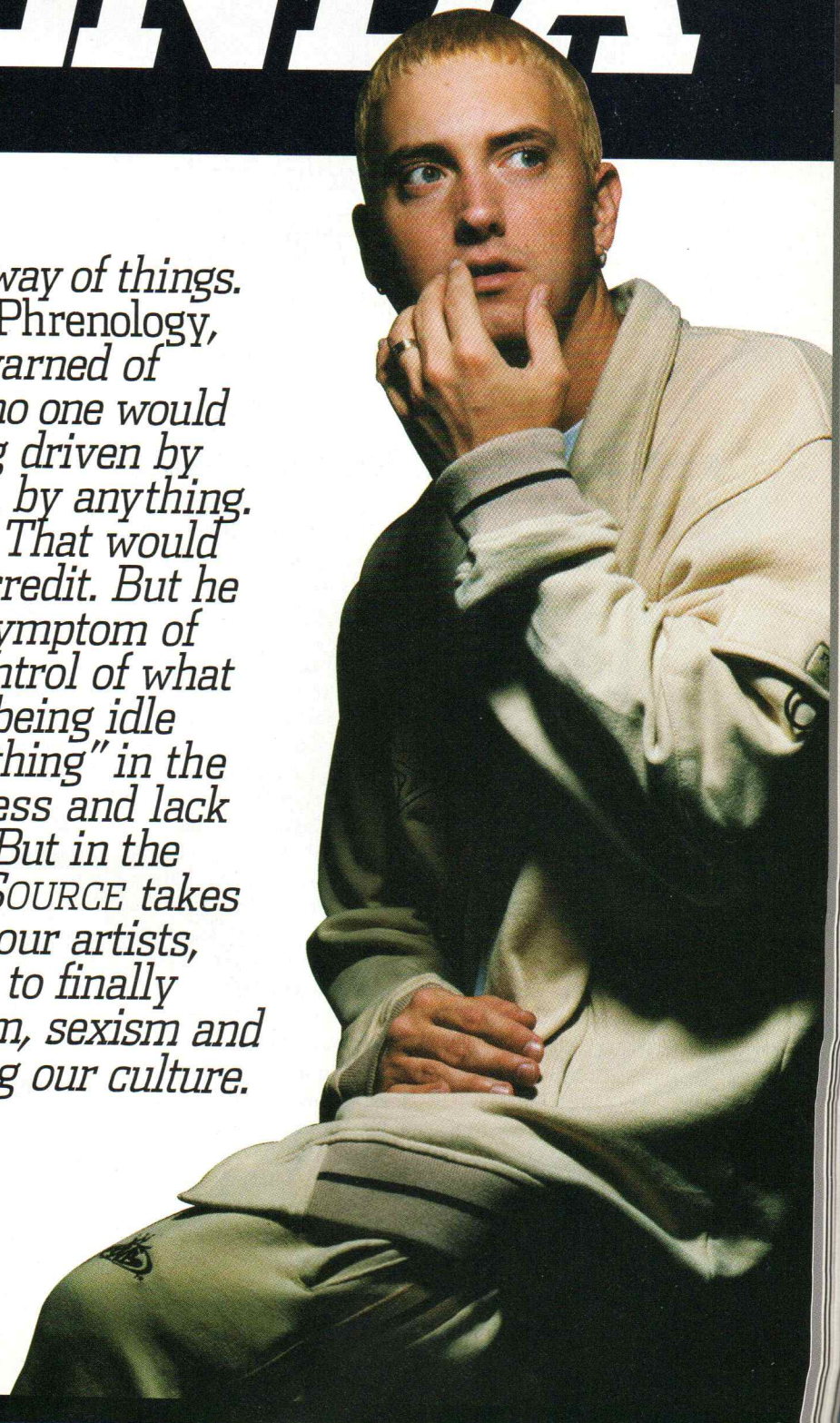
THE EXTINCTION AGENDA



There's something in the way of things. At the end of The Roots' Phrenology, *poet Amiri Baraka warned of an influential force that no one would name. Hip-Hop is being driven by something but isn't* driven *by anything. No, it's not just Eminem. That would be giving him too much credit. But he is a symptom of it. A symptom of our reluctance to take control of what we created instead of being idle participants. That "something" in the way is a jarring emptiness and lack of focus. Turbulence. But in the pages that follow,* THE SOURCE *takes the controls and allows our artists, politicians and readers to finally confront the forces of racism, sexism and denial that are slowly killing our culture.*

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THE DI

By now, the world knows about Eminem's notorious racist rants. Now, one White gentleman from his neighborhood divulges how this tape finally made it to the public's ears and why he thinks the world needed to hear the real Slim Shady.

Interview by Fahiym Ratcliffe
Photograph by Mo Daoud

EMINEM HAS A LOT MORE IN COMMON with Richard Nixon than you would think. Both emerged from poverty-stricken broken homes and scraped their way to their lofty goals (becoming Hip-Hop's top-selling performer and the President, respectively). They were both still highly controversial while at the peak of their power but once they reached their respective heights, both were undone by recordings that were never intended to be heard.

A Detroit resident and lifelong Hip-Hop fan stumbled upon the now infamous racist Eminem tapes over a year ago. And after much soul-searching, he decided it was necessary—for Hip-Hop's sake—to make this recording public and expose to the world what he felt was the real Marshall Mathers III. So he traveled 10 hours from his Detroit home to New York City in a rented 2003 Mustang and arrived at the door of THE SOURCE's offices one October afternoon ready to make history. In the weeks following his journey, he remained adamant that he had made the right decision. Now, in an exclusive interview, he reveals his motives and delves into the troubled mind of Eminem.

Let's get right to it, where did you get this tape?

I got the tape from a friend who got it from [Eminem's former DJ]. I'm a friend of Eminem's old DJ, who got left behind. Eminem left him in the dirt. They were together for years, at least 15 that I know of. And around the time when Eminem came out, maybe a little bit after his record came out, [Eminem dropped him]. I've had the tape for over a year and a half.

So what made you come forward now? It must feel like a burden has been lifted.

I wanted to expose the truth and let people know he's fake. I'm glad I came forward and I hope people take a stand against this cat. I'd just like to see the truth come out. I know he is not doing nothing for nobody around [Detroit] except for a few people. I don't care if he sells millions of records, he is still a racist muthafucka. It has to be exposed.

Eminem has millions of Stans, I mean fans, but this tape will probably cause him to lose the respect of many people, particularly Black people. What were your thoughts when you first heard the tape?

Racist! Racist-ass shit. Instantly I knew it was very racist. My boys think that it's fucked up [also]. I was shocked when I heard him being like that, [especially because] he's got Black people surrounding him and [with] the way he portrays himself. He does Hip-Hop, and that's [part of] Black and Latino culture. That shit is fucked up.

There was an article in *Vibe* in 2002 where Eminem was quoted as saying he would never use the N-word in his songs and said, "There's some things I just don't do." What do you say to a comment like that?

He's a hypocrite, a closet racist. He's got racist feelings. I mean, people can change, but in his case, I don't know. Hey, if a pedophile changed [his ways], would you still want him around your kids? Not me!

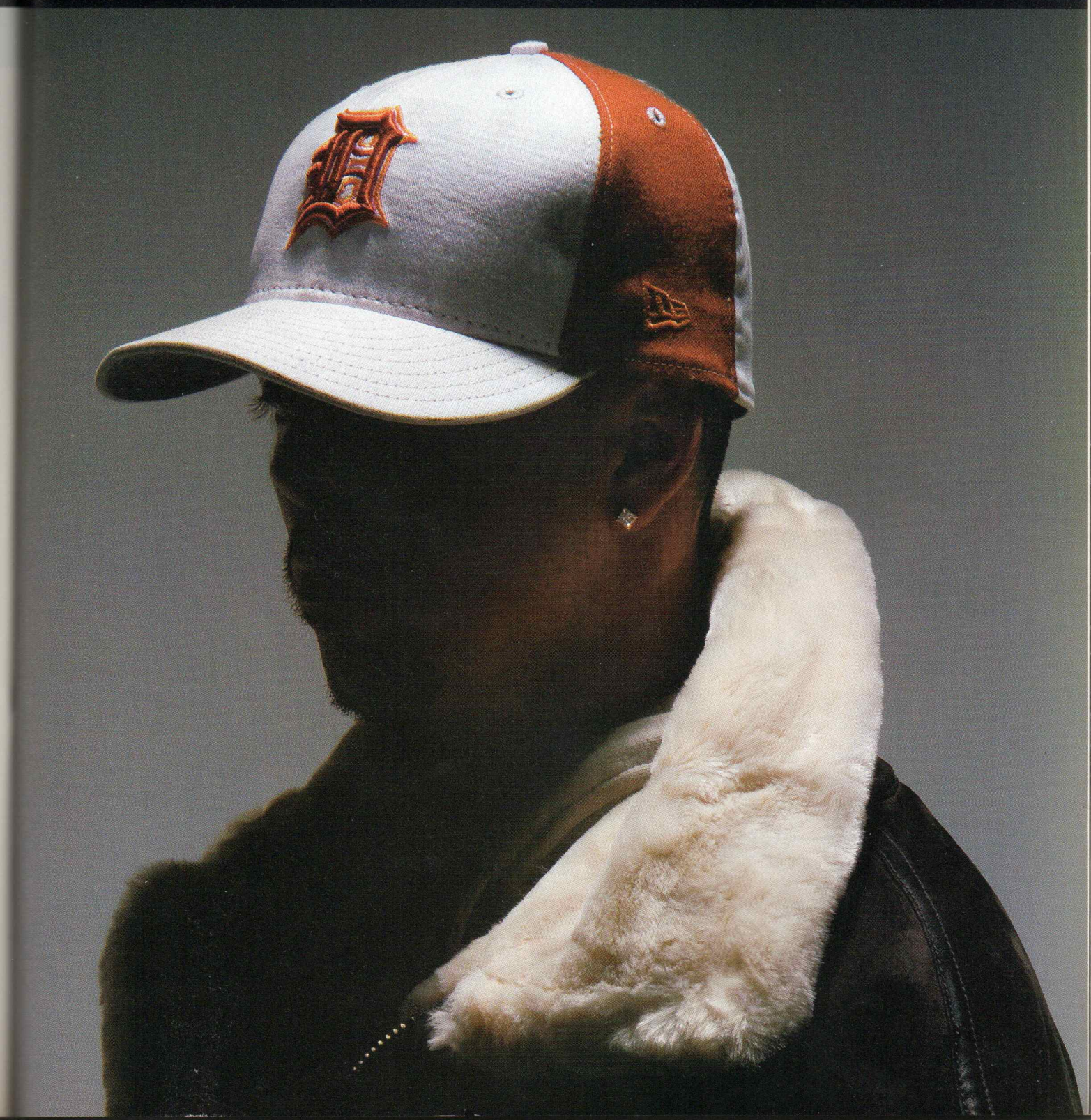
That's a strange comparison, but back to the origins of the tape. When you first heard it, did you immediately know it was Eminem rapping?

Oh yeah, no question. I don't question that at all. I wouldn't come with some fraudulent shit.

> "He's got another tape that makes this look like Sunday school. He's getting really ill with it, calling Black people 'moon crickets' and 'porch monkeys.'"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 95

SCOVERY



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SLIM SHADY

THE SOURCE uncovers the startling truth about Marshall Mathers and the racist comments that have Hip-Hop patiently waiting for answers

Words by Kim Osorio

Let's do the math. If Eminem were Black, he would have sold half—or a lot less than half. His story, that of a skilled lyricist born and raised in Detroit, fully immersed in Hip-Hop culture and struggling through lyrical battles until he finally triumphs at the top, has been hyped up as if it were something really special. But in truth, it's really just the same story as many Black rappers'. If you think about it, it could have easily been his boy Proof, a member of D12 known in his community to be an equally skilled MC. But it wasn't.

Today, Marshall Mathers III, a White MC born in St. Joseph, Missouri, is rap's biggest success story. Without a doubt, he is a very skilled rapper—maybe one of the best. After all, his independent work garnered critical acclaim and earned Em a spot in the coveted Unsigned Hype column in this magazine before he was ever signed. In his seven-year career, Eminem has released three major-label albums, sold over 20-million records worldwide, started his own Hip-Hop label, and has been called a genius by *Rolling Stone*. But his race has earned him privileges. He marched into the MTV Video Music Awards with over 100 clones of himself, something no Black rapper would have been allowed to do.

Arguably, there is a desire on the part of top executives at major media outlets and corporations like MTV, which has had, at best, a shaky history of dealing with Black music, to see a White person in Hip-Hop slide into the top spot. But because Hip-Hop represents the oppressed communities and speaks for the victims of the embedded racist structure that is still prevalent in this country, there is a risk when these tendencies go unchecked. It is, in fact, the duty of these corporations who are involved in Hip-Hop to be sensitive to these issues. And now, the harsh reality is that the people that have laid down the foundation, along with the younger generation for whom it was created, are being forced out of the one thing they have that truly gives them a voice.

Until recently, Eminem has seemed very careful about his place as a White rapper in a predominantly African American and Latino Hip-Hop culture. And in a November 2002 *Vibe* article, he had this to say about using the word "nigger": "It's not my place to say it. There's some things that I just don't do."

But on an old recording (produced by White beatmakers he no longer works with), which was given to THE SOURCE in October of last year, Eminem opposes dating Black women "'cause I don't like that nigger shit." On another song he calls Black people "moon crickets," "spear chuckers" and "porch monkeys."

To put it in perspective, remember this is a White rapper with the ability to influence millions of minds who is saying these things to other White people behind closed doors.

To date, few Hip-Hop players have called Marshall Mathers out on these racist comments, probably because he holds so much power in the game, but there is a growing chorus of dissent among Black leaders outside of the music industry. And many of the people near his beloved 8 Mile, people with whom he collaborated during his rise to superstardom, aren't afraid to speak on it. Understanding Marshall Mathers's past—his life *before* the Black commu-

> "Eminem has this one song about crossing 8 Mile and never looking back. He needs to realize that kind of mentality is only gonna tear people apart, not bring them together." —Chaos Kid

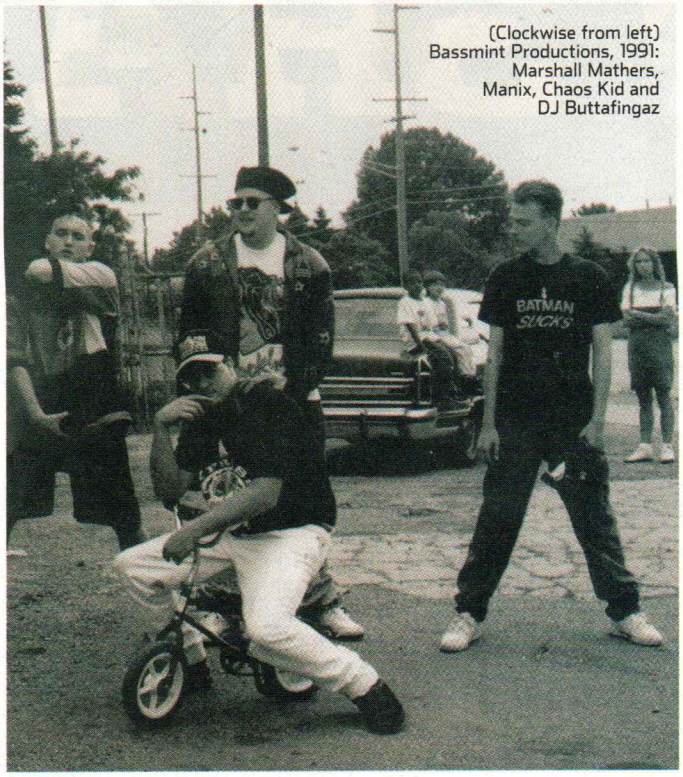
nity accepted him—explains how a rapper of his caliber could have something like the racist recording hidden in his closet. See, during his high school days, he was going back and forth across 8 Mile.

THE D

8 Mile is a major roadway in Detroit that divides the suburbs from the city. If you go toward 7 Mile, you find the 'hood, complete with Coney Island restaurants and oversized liquor stores. That side is predominantly Black. The city of Detroit, as a whole, is actually 83 percent Black, with the third highest number of Blacks of any city in the United States. On the other side of 8 Mile, going north toward 9 Mile, is considered the suburbs. That area is mostly made up of White people.

Historically, Detroit has been a breeding ground for talent, specifically Black talent. The birthplace of Motown Records, Detroit has seen the rise of Stevie Wonder and the Jackson 5, among many others. But where Hip-Hop is concerned, there's a long line of artists whose names have somehow been written out of history. Few have actually achieved mainstream or national recognition, aside from Eminem and Kid Rock.

The first rap artist from Detroit to sign a major recording deal was late-'80s pioneer Awesome Dre. Then came Esham, who sold hundreds of thousands of records independently. Both were hardcore rappers and are cited as pioneers of Detroit Hip-Hop. Eventually, gangsta groups, such as Detroit's Most Wanted and Rap Mafia, became local legends like their predecessors. Their stories are the ones that are rarely told.



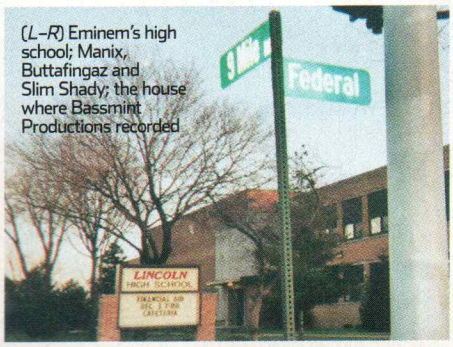
(Clockwise from left) Bassmint Productions, 1991: Marshall Mathers, Manix, Chaos Kid and DJ Buttafingaz

> "There was this thing that they did. It was called 'The Racist Rap Hour With Bassmint Productions' and I refused to even get on it." —Chaos Kid

But when Hip-Hop began to reflect its more conscious artists in the early '90s, Detroit lyricists such as Proof started emerging. Soon thereafter, clothing entrepreneur Maurice Malone founded the Hip-Hop Shop, a clothing store where local artists showcased their lyrical skills. Eminem was a part of that circuit.

The VH1 specials, articles, MTV shows and especially the film *8 Mile* would have you believe that Eminem grew up in one of Detroit's Black neighborhoods. But, actually, Marshall Mathers went to Lincoln High School, a predominantly White school in the Detroit suburb of Warren, Michigan, dubbed War-n-tucky for its reputation as a hotbed of racism. He moved to Warren in his early teens.

From 1988 when Em was 16 until around 1993 when he was 21, Eminem formed a rap collective known as Bassmint Productions. The all-White crew consisted of Eminem (M&M) himself, another MC, Chaos Kid, and a pair of brothers, DJ Buttafingaz and Manix, who did production. Together, they performed at local shows and recorded hundreds of tapes. In 1991, Manix's friend Shortcut, a White Hip-Hop dancer who



(*L–R*) Eminem's high school; Manix, Buttafingaz and Slim Shady; the house where Bassmint Productions recorded

frequented the clubs back then, met Champtown while dancing for Rob Base in Canada, and Shortcut introduced him to Bassmint Productions. Champtown is an African American rapper and entrepreneur who started rhyming when he was 9. He was raised in the streets of Detroit and was a reputable Hip-Hop head in the community. He had been down with Esham in his earlier years and later started his own label, Straight Jacket Records. He introduced Eminem to *his* side of 8 Mile. This man, however, has been left out of Eminem's story, and there is much more to it than people know.

Bassmint Productions' two MCs had different styles. "Eminem was a battle rapper, very heroic, very egotistical, while Chaos Kid was very conscious, a Poor Righteous Teachers, Public Enemy, KRS-One type of guy," says Champtown. "[T]hey definitely clashed on the creativity side. They both had skills as far as delivery goes, but their subject matter was different. If they are on a record and one is rapping about himself and what he will do to MCs and then Chaos Kid would rap about how the sun is going to fall and burn us all, it would just be too much of a difference, [so] eventually they decided to go their own separate ways."

Chaos Kid, who is currently promoting a community-focused organization Idle Kids, no longer speaks to Champ-town, but agrees he and Eminem were too different to remain in a group together. "For a while, I did influence him ... but I was about Public Enemy and he was Naughty By Nature," Chaos Kid explains.

"Since he has blown up, he

THE MAKING OF A HIP-HOP MONOPOLY

This diagram illustrates the magnitude of the current and growing monopolization of Hip-Hop. Corporate control and concentration of radio, retail distribution and major recording artists under one record label has affected the ability of independent artists and labels to compete or succeed. In addition, the only music that is heard and promoted from this conglomerate is highly focused on questionable themes—crime, drugs, murder etc.—while Black and Latino communities are continually victimized by these conditions.

INTERSCOPE RECORDS

Over 20% of all Hip-Hop albums sold in 2003 were released under the Interscope Records umbrella, which includes record labels such as Geffen/A&M and DreamWorks. Interscope is overseen by chairman and CEO Jimmy Iovine and is filtered through their top-selling Hip-Hop acts, Eminem and 50 Cent, who, along with producer Dr. Dre, have label deals of their own (Shady, G-Unit and Aftermath Records). Interscope has created extremely tight-knit relationships with the three critical outlets for control of Hip-Hop: radio, MTV and retail. The creativity of top artists is effectively dictated by the system and is made to fit the new corporate arrangement (uncontroversial, radio-friendly first singles with R&B choruses).

RADIO
CONGLOMERATES

The concentration of ownership in the radio industry in the past several years has lead to the majority of the largest and most influential Hip-Hop radio stations being owned by only four radio companies, Clear Channel, Emmis Broadcasting Infinity Broadcasting and Radio One.

MTV

MTV has a very awkward history with Hip-Hop. Most recently, they created separate categories for "Hip-Hop Video" and "Rap Video" at their annual Video Music Awards, a first step in the effort to redefine the term "Hip-Hop" for their predominately young, White, mainstream audience, and eventually push "Rap" away. (i.e. "Hip-Hop" equals Eminem, Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears etc.; "Rap" is what Black guys do.)

RETAIL
CHAIN CONSOLIDATION

80% of all music in the U.S. is sold at retail outlets owned by eight different companies.

- Wal-Mart
- Best Buy
- Target
- Transworld
- Musicland
- Tower Records
- K-Mart
- Circuit City

The strength of the above relationships effectively locks out any independent labels and artists, many of which are minority-owned, from competing in the market.

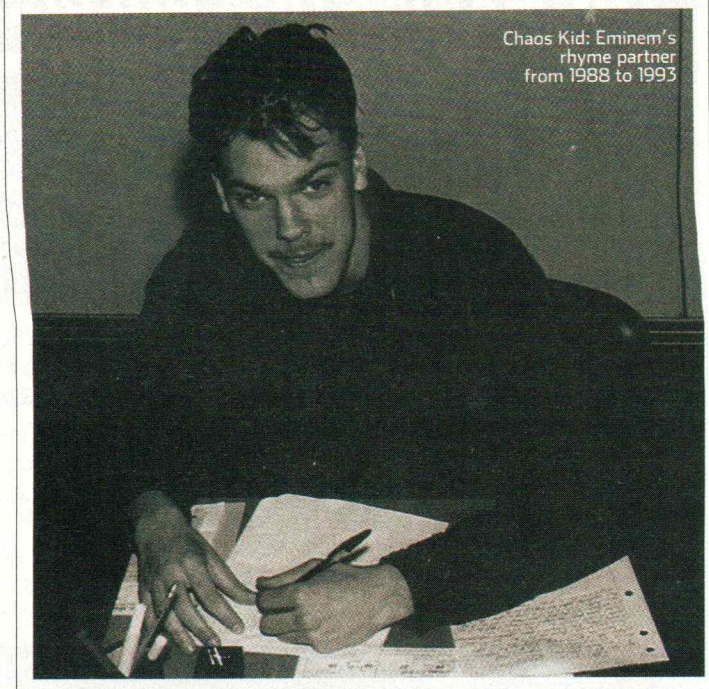
INDEPENDENT RECORD LABELS AND ARTISTS SUFFER

hasn't made much of an effort to stay in contact with the people he made music with," says Chaos Kid, who hasn't heard from "Marsh," as he calls him, in over a year. "He has this one song about crossing 8 Mile and never looking back. He needs to realize that kind of mentality is only gonna tear people apart, not bring 'em together."

Chaos Kid also remembers recording a wealth of material back then, but he no longer has any of it. "We recorded over 100 of those freestyle sessions," he says. A few of these songs have surfaced recently.

"This one day, there was this thing that they did. It was called 'The Racist Rap Hour with Bassmint Productions.' And I refused to even get on it. I know it's kind of hard for a Black person to understand why White people that are in rap music would do this, but it was a joke. I didn't feel comfortable about being a part of it, so I didn't rap on it. It was never meant to be released to the public," says Chaos Kid.

Trying to rationalize in his own head why Marshall would make songs where he uses the N-word and degrades Black women, he begins to dissect Eminem's true background. "*8 Mile* was a movie based loosely on Eminem's life, but it was not a documentary of his life. Although Hollywood would have liked to portray him as a White kid in the ghetto—the *only* White kid struggling to come up with no other White people around him when he first started recording ... [but] we were all White. Eminem didn't even start working with Black producers until '95."



Chaos Kid: Eminem's rhyme partner from 1988 to 1993

> "I know it's hard for a Black person to understand why White people in rap would do this. But it was a joke, I didn't feel comfortable being part of it. It was never meant to be released." —Chaos Kid

Despite their distance, Chaos Kid leaves the door open for Marshall to come home. "I think that it's important, especially being as rich as he is now, to try to provide some opportunity for other people out here who aren't as lucky as [he] was," he offers. "It would just be nice to see him get in contact and be more concerned about friends and the community out of which he came, instead of trying to escape it."

Champtown agrees Eminem neglects to acknowledge the many people back in Michigan who influenced him. "They were rolling with Straight Jacket Records from '91 to '95. [Eminem] was stiff with it at first. I definitely was responsible for his humor. I gave him the confidence to be funny. I used to be the jokerman back in the days. When I see Eminem, that's a part of me. That's my soul; that's my heart. [I taught him] the hooks, how you lay a song down, how to make an album, how to have funny shit."

Some time around 1995, Eminem and Champtown had a falling out over Eminem's wife, Kim. Champtown says they've only seen each other a few times since then, but they've spoken. But in 2000, Champtown ran into Manix, who later played him some Eminem recordings.

(L–R) Chaos's house on Novara where Marshall stayed; a spot on 8 Mile; 54 Sound Studio where Eminem and D12 currently record

BOTTOM ROW: RACHEL HOLLAND GETTY IMAGES

CONTINUED ON PAGE 76

MOMENT OF CLARITY

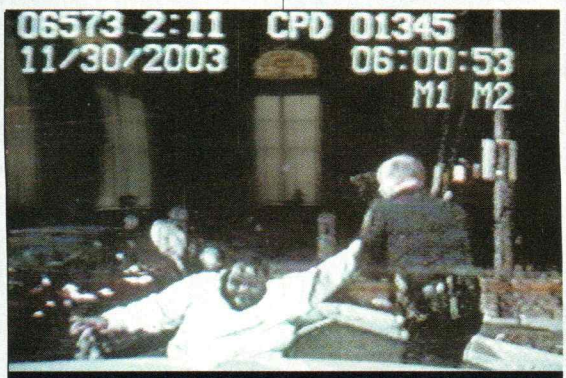
In the shadow of success and excess, racism goes ignored, but at what price?

Words by Jerry L. Barrow

It is a peculiar sensation, this double- consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. — *W.E.B. Dubois, from* The Souls of Black Folk

Tyrone's S. Carter sneakers are spotless and his iPod holds 100 hours of music. But the heat in his building doesn't work and his school doesn't have enough books. He accepts this as life as usual and doesn't think his circumstances have anything to do with his race. It's said the greatest trick the devil ever played was to convince humankind that he did not exist. And today, one of the most obvious manifestations of evil—racism—is treated as an aberration instead of a fact of life for African-Americans and other racial minorities. Reverend Al Sharpton told the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "We've gotten to an era where people are much more subtle and more manicured. Jim Crow is now James Crow Jr., Esquire." But more important than Jim Crow's makeover is the refashioning of his victims. It's hard to seem oppressed when you're driving a Maybach and hosting white-linen parties in the Hamptons.

It appears that we, the offspring of the Civil Rights Movement, want to forget. For generation X, Y and beyond, racism is limited to corrupt police officers, taxi drivers and conservative media personalities. But we don't stop to think that the people we work with, work for and patronize could be discriminating against us as well. We consider ourselves too enlightened to be victimized by racism or not recognize it. Some time ago, Internet letters about Tommy Hilfiger making racist comments on *Oprah* were dismissed as a hoax, and many of us privately celebrated that it was indeed not true. We wouldn't have had to change our wardrobes for political reasons.



Video footage of Nathanial Jones being beaten by police

But the sad part is that our discussions of race have been reduced to chain emails and reactionary responses to the bias attack of the day. And even when that occurs, our vision sometimes gets blurry. When Cincinnati Police recently beat 41-year-old Nathaniel Jones to death, the excuses came hard and fast: He was high on drugs; he resisted arrest; the police used restraint—anything to keep it from being called a racially motivated attack. It is a disgusting display of denial when even in the face of visual evidence so many Americans still want to negate the possibility that such an attitude or action is racist. "We should call them murderers instead of racists," offers stic.man of dead prez. "People can deny racism but they can't deny the facts."

UNSPOKEN HEARD

In October of last year, Right-wing radio host Rush Limbaugh left his comfort zone to comment on football. A racist remark about the Philadelphia Eagles' quarterback Donovan McNabb drew the ire of fans, and Limbaugh resigned (though still insisting his comments that "the media has been very desirous that a Black quarterback do well" were not racist). Within days, Limbaugh was back in his corner of the morning-radio world, far away from anyone who might be the target of his vitriol. But maybe that wasn't the best thing. Is he any less racist because we can't hear him? Are the ideas he espouses any less dangerous because they aren't on *Monday Night Football*? No.

This is why statements made by Eminem in a freestyle from 10 years ago are still dangerous. In burying them in the past, we hope to rob them of their power and relevance. (Which only makes sense since the question of power and relevance has been central to arguments supporting the use of the word "nigger" by the post-Civil-Rights generation: "We're taking the power away and making it our own," the argument goes.) But this word is just as powerful as it was in the early 1700s, because it can still hurt, dehumanize and scar, the reason it was invented in the first place.

The sick irony is that most people who use the word "nigger" or "nigga" freely today were first called a nigger by another Black person. In those cases, the hatred associated with the word is lost. "Nigger" is treated like a magic sword that only cuts in the hands of certain people. But that's a bastardization of the old National Rifle Association argument that guns don't kill people, people kill people. The word doesn't offend, the person does. It's insane. "It's an abomination that the word 'nigger' has been used so loosely," fires legendary The Last Poets' Abiodun Oyewole. "And I take some responsibility for that, because we said 'nigger' in a lot of pieces. N.W.A sampled it and cut out the climactic line 'Die, nigga, so black folks can take over.' [But] we were trying to get people *not* to be niggers."

In a modest house in Brooklyn, a debate is brewing across generations. A babyboomer bread on jazz and calypso has never listened to an Eminem record. But lyrics he has read in a newspaper convince him Marshall Mathers is a racist. His niece, a 12 year old who subsists on a steady supply of music videos and who could probably recite the lyrics to "The Real Slim Shady" on a dime, doesn't feel that calling Black girls "dumb" make Eminem racist. She waves it off with a shrug. This angers her uncle, who vigorously defends his stance. But why? He knows the struggles that were made afford her the luxury of being forgiving.

"We Black people are some loyal people," says stic.man. "So we don't want to snitch somebody out. That's the kind of people we are under all this oppression. But we gotta wake up. How we treat ourselves and let other people treat us means something to our children and our mental health."

You can make every defense of Eminem's character in 2003, but there is no question that statements like "Black girls are dumb, White girls are good" are indeed racist. This is something that he and his handlers have glossed over in their rush to explain them away. This is what frustrates people who live through racism; it's also what disappoints his fans, who feel that Shady's rehearsed responses to his actions are just that: *shady*. Between the old heads and the young'uns, there are those of us his age who didn't ride a segregated bus in Montgomery but were still called "spades" by racist kids in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, in '88. We had to listen to people chant "Prop 48" when we stood at the foul line at a H.S. basketball game in '91. And we're now the successful lawyers who still can't buy property in certain neighborhoods. Yes, our generation has been privileged to opportunities unimagined by our ancestors, but the struggle for social, political and economic justice is far from over in a society that has yet to cure the social cancer of White supremacy and Black inferiority. Some may want us to forget, but we haven't. And we should never.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 74

Champtown was shocked at what he discovered. "I heard the term 'moon crickets' being used. I heard 'niggers this.' I didn't understand why Manix would play that for me, [but I guess] he was bitter at Eminem at the time. I definitely heard some tapes with Slim [using] words like 'moon crickets' and shit like that on it. And there was 'spear chucker' on it and 'porch monkeys.' "

Champtown continues, "I have questions and I want to know what is going on. I am slightly confused because the Eminem I knew, all he wanted to do was be accepted by Blacks.... When I am hearing these songs, they were recorded during the time he was with me and I never heard them until last year. I know how his voice sounded then and how it sounds now." Champtown admits it could have been Eminem's upbringing that influenced him to say those things. "The statement '8 Mile' alone means racist," he explains. "Because 8 Mile is a dividing line. Blacks on this side; Whites on this side. You can't cross 8 Mile without racial tension."

Though Eminem has stated that his breakup with an "African American girlfriend" is what led him to record "Foolish Pride," on which he says, "Black girls are bitches," among other degrading things about Black women, his older friends are skeptical. "I don't believe it. He was with Kim for the whole time I knew him. I never knew him to date any Black women," says Champtown.

Chaos Kid doesn't remember a Black girlfriend either. "This whole story about him going out with a Black girl—I don't know."

Champtown

"I definitely heard some tapes with Slim using words like 'moon crickets,' 'spear chucker' and 'porch monkeys.'"
—Champtown

Chaos Kid adds, "I got involved in Hip-Hop because I had a love for Black culture and Black music, and that is what drew me in.... But I'm glad I wasn't a part of [the racist freestyle sessions].... I felt it was in bad taste and I didn't want to be a part of it. He actually asked Manix to destroy it," says Chaos Kid.

DJ Buttafingaz was tracked down at his residence in a suburb of Detroit, but he refused to comment. He admitted, however, that both he and his brother Manix still had much more unreleased Eminem material. Manix could not be reached for comment.

RAP GETS A MAKEOVER

When a White production duo known as the Bass Brothers heard Eminem on a local radio station in Detroit, they called up and invited him to their home studio. From that point on, they began working together, and they recorded Eminem's first two releases, *Infinite* and *The Slim Shady EP*. Then, following an appearance by Eminem promoting himself on the *Wake Up Show* in L.A., a copy of *The Slim Shady EP* landed in the hands of Interscope Records chairman Jimmy Iovine, who brought it to Dr. Dre, encouraging him to sign Eminem to his Aftermath label. It's been said that King Tee was supposed to be released before Eminem on the Aftermath/Interscope label, but Iovine had other plans.

Iovine knew that a co-sign from Dr. Dre would give Eminem his credibility with African Americans, so Eminem was made the priority. Eventually, Eminem was rewarded with his own label deal, Shady Records, to which he later signed D12. All six members, except for Slim, are Black. But some believe Eminem's manager, Paul Rosenberg, who is White, is trying to phase out the Black influence on Eminem, even washing out the Black presence within the corporate structure of their company.

Paul Rosenberg, who was formerly a rapper and is also from Detroit, started managing Em around 1998. "I feel that Paul Rosenberg is prejudiced," says Champtown. "I heard from inside the camp about how he is not fair, paperwork-wise, and about how Blacks are being underpaid.... [Rosenberg] walked into a pot of gold that was created for him. I know who introduced him to Eminem—it was Mark Hicks—and he is

no longer on the map. He was fired. He was the last Black survivor with any authority in the camp and he was fired recently."

A former employee at Shady Records, who is White, spoke to THE SOURCE on condition of anonymity. He worked very closely with Eminem when he was first signed to Aftermath. "In the end, when you talk about inspiring Black people, what has the Shady camp done for Black execs? You think Obie Trice is gonna become an executive when all this shit is done? Of course not. There's no distribution of money, power or wealth."

An African American attorney, who also asked to remain nameless, was employed by a law firm that had Eminem and Rosenberg as clients. He says that after just five years, the complexion of the firm's employees, who were originally mostly minorities, changed dramatically.

"Until I see two Black multimillionaires [in the Shady Records camp]," says Champtown, "when there are hundreds of millions floating around, then I am always going to think [Rosenberg] is racist—until people like Proof become multimillionaires."

But as long as credit is being stolen from Black Hip-Hop heads like DJ Head, a former DJ for Eminem, and DJ Butter, a former DJ for D12, that won't be happening. "DJ Head left because they were taking credit for all the tracks he was producing. I heard he produced Jay-Z's 'Renegade' along with other songs on the first two albums," says Champtown.

Angered about his own situation, DJ Butter decided to take legal action. "I did a whole album called *Shit Can Happen*. It was my theme song. And when Em heard it, he just cut me out of the whole deal ... so they went ahead and remade the track for D12 without giving me credit, a check, or anything."

Eminem's former bodyguard, Byron "Big-Naz" Williams, an African American, felt he too was underpaid. He quit when Eminem and Rosenberg did nothing about it; Rosenberg even withheld Williams's last paycheck. "The last day that [Slim] and I talked, I guess it was an act of desperation, trying to piss me off. His words were 'The beef is on, nigga.' I said 'Damn, now I'm a nigga.' " Naz was eventually paid, but only after he included copies of the unpaid invoices in his tell-all book, *Shady Bizzness*. "History never changes. I've been in situations where I've been friends with White people and as soon as they get mad [the N-word] comes out when the situation gets sour."

STAND UP

Before word got out about Eminem's 10-year-old racist comments, Detroit artists such as Strike, who played Lyckety-Splyt in *8 Mile*, refused to believe Marshall Mathers is or was a racist. But Strike, like others from his neighborhood, was under the impression Eminem had actually grown up in the 'hood.

"A muthafucking White boy that grew up in the 'hood hanging around niggas all day is a nigga to me, and he can say 'nigga,'" says Strike. "Now if a muthafucka that grew up in the suburbs calls me a nigga, he's getting it."

Contrary to what he stated in *Vibe* magazine, Eminem has used the word "nigger"

A WOMAN'S WORTH

Councilwoman demands more accountability in Hip-Hop

AS BLACK WOMEN all over cringed at the lyrical content of the 10-year-old Eminem tape, there were a few women who stood up to address the long-standing issue of misogyny in Hip-Hop forcing the industry to finally take notice. Shortly after hearing about the tape, Brooklyn Councilwoman Yvette D. Clarke, joined by community activists and City Hall officials, addressed the bigger picture and held a press conference demanding a change in Hip-Hop culture and its attitudes toward women.

"I came up in the Hip-Hop culture," said Clarke. "To me, [Eminem's lyrics] were a slap in the face. But I thought it was very symbolic that we've come to this point.... We've been in a downward spiral weighted down by the negative portrayals that [Black people] form of ourselves." Eminem's lyrics seemed to be the straw that broke the camel's back for Clarke and her supporters, who will no longer stand for the degradation of women in Hip-Hop.

"We're seeing the repercussions of an unchecked industry," Clarke explained. "There are other artists who look like my father and brother who are just as guilty of the type of hateful anti-female words Eminem espoused." Not wanting to personalize the issue, Clarke also attributed Eminem's words to being the product of an industry that has benefited from exploiting negative aspects of Hip-Hop culture. She says she hopes this will challenge other artists to finally take a look at themselves.

A community activist from the Code Foundation, Erica Ford, who participated in Councilwoman Clarke's press conference, believes Hip-Hop culture is being too soft, giving Eminem the easy way out by tolerating his apology. "People should make clear to him what is accepted and not accepted in the 'hood ... and we should not give him the okay to disrespect us," said Ford. "He has capitalized off our culture and he has degraded not only Black women but the Black community.... There has to be some new rules and regulations."

—JANIQUE BURKE

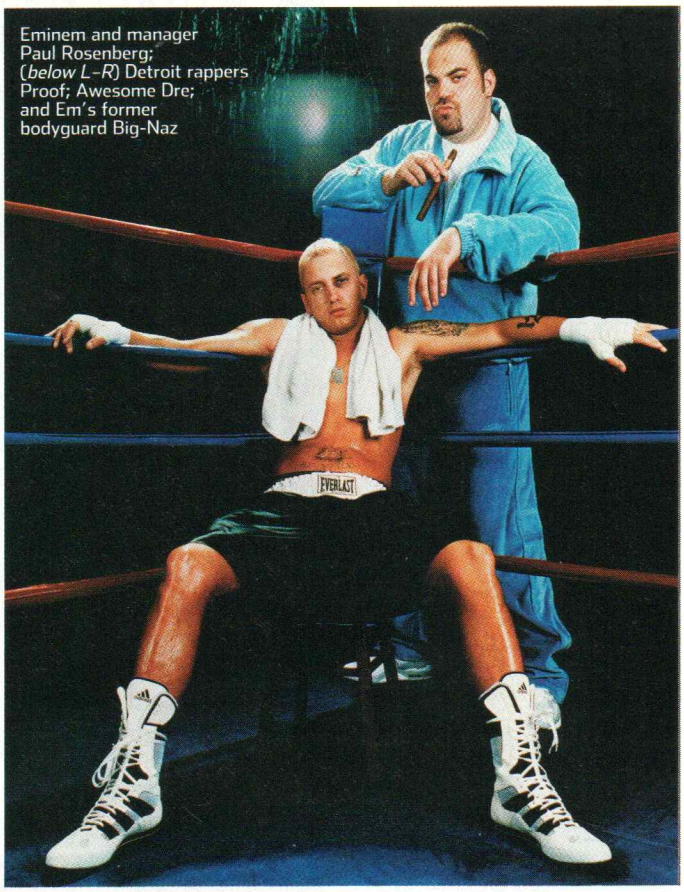
multiple times. (He even said the word in concert in London. A CD of a performance overseas, on which Eminem is heard saying the word while onstage with Dr. Dre, was anonymously sent to THE SOURCE.)

Though Eminem has already admitted to making the comments, some people still believe he has done his share just by putting on other Black artists in and out of Detroit. His signings of D12, street credible artists Obie Trice and 50 Cent seem to have earned him some points in the 'hood. But Detroit rapper E-Dub, who is biracial, says he knows better.

"[We] can't make excuses," he says. "What's wrong is wrong and what's right is right! I was trippin' to hear Black women say, 'That's just how he rap.' "

E-Dub also believes Eminem's recent signings of Black artists are motivated by his own interests in self-promotion. "Em ain't got a song with anyone in Detroit that ain't down with Shady Records," he says. "They trying to monopolize the game. You claim the city, but you don't want the city to blow unless it's through you, unless a nigga is signed to Shady Records. He hurt Detroit 'cause if he helped it, why ain't nobody got no deals? [There are groups] moving independent units, buzzing on independent radio. Why the fuck Rock Bottom or the Cheddar Boyz ain't got a deal? They selling 10, 20,000—selling out they own concerts! [Eminem] could make one phone call and say, 'These niggas is hot,' and Universal would give them a deal. They would cut the check tomorrow."

Champtown agrees. "Where have you ever, in your life, seen a muthafucka go right to shoot a video and get added directly to MTV in regular rotation? Yeah, Eminem is blowing up and doing his thing.... But we need some more spirit back in Detroit rap, bring Awesome Dre back. Don't forget the Black pioneers. It's a lot of niggas that's been sacrificing their lives for this Hip-Hop shit in Detroit, and they are just [going to label] Detroit rap as 'Eminem....' I will not let the history of Detroit go down like that."



Eminem and manager Paul Rosenberg; (*below L–R*) Detroit rappers Proof; Awesome Dre; and Em's former bodyguard Big-Naz

> "Until I see two Black multi-millionaires [in the Shady Records camp], I am always going to think Rosenberg is a racist."
> —Champtown

Detroit rap pioneer Awesome Dre isn't giving Eminem a pass either. "[It's not acceptable] when you coming out and you supposed to be for a certain people, and then you dis those certain people, and you aren't even *from* those certain people.... Even if it's a joke, it's still a racist one," he says.

It speaks volumes that Eminem, at press time, one month after THE SOURCE released these songs at a press conference, had not yet come out publicly—on TV, radio, or in print—to address this issue directly, with anything other than a written statement on his label's letterhead. He and his label seem to know how to work the media very well when he drops an album.

Chaos Kid says, "To me, he's reached a point where he's put the dollar before his conscience, and unfortunately, it is going to be his downfall. He's losing touch and he's in a different class now. He's not poor anymore. Listen to the one song he made about crossing 8 Mile and never looking back. It makes me sad to see him come from that experience and get rich and turn his back on everything. Eminem is in that same position. He has an empire and an opportunity to flip the script, but I don't see that happening."

At the very least, the Hip-Hop community is owed a more personal, sincere apology and explanation from Eminem. This isn't about his talent—that is undeniable. It's about paying respect to a culture that has made him rich, and proving that he knows what Hip-Hop is really about.

Will the Real Slim Shady please stand up?

EMINEM AND PAUL ROSENBERG: ROGER ERICKSON/CORBIS OUTLINE; PROOF: BRAD MILLER/RETNA LTD. 1999 BYRON WILLIAMS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

POLITICS AS USUAL

Russell Simmons's Comments

On November 20, 2003, Russell Simmons and his organization, the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, issued a statement in defense of Eminem. Simmons stated: "These lyrics are disgusting, but the oneness of Hip-Hop culture has transformed many young people in trailerparks around the country away from their parents' old mindset of White supremacy. We believe Eminem's apology is sincere and forthright. He continues not only to be an icon of Hip-Hop, but also has evolved into a good soldier who gives back money, time and energy to the community, encouraging this generation of youth to reach their highest aspirations." The following day, Simmons appeared on New York's Hot 97 radio station and admitted he had not heard the songs in question and he does not know Eminem very well personally.

THE SOURCE responded to Simmons's statement and charged him with being irresponsible to the community that his organization serves. THE SOURCE co-founder David Mays said, "The racist Eminem songs from just 10 years ago raise some serious issues regarding race and racism in the Hip-Hop industry that cannot be simply swept under the rug." Mays, who stepped down from his position on the HHSAN Board of Directors as a result of Simmons's precipitous statements, added, "I believe it's irresponsible for the HHSAN to rush to judgment over an issue of this magnitude without proper diligence and without being forthright about its financial ties to Eminem's camp."

Activists around the country are also questioning Simmons's actions, suggesting that Simmons, an executive at Vivendi Universal, which is the corporate parent to both Def Jam and Interscope Records, is being used by Eminem's camp for damage control within the Black community. National radio personality Bob Law said, "Simmons is in no position to accept Eminem's apology for the Black community. Black men should stand in complete unity with our sisters because this is an issue that affects all of us. We must regain control of our culture...."

Renowned activist Viola Plummer, who joined with New York City Councilwoman Yvette Clark and Erica Ford of the Code Foundation late last November to announce a boycott of Eminem's records, clothing and his other business ventures, offered, "We remember Elvis, Mick Jagger, Rod Stewart — hijackers of our music, intellectual properties and creativity—who rose to "stardom" denigrating Black women. We are not an easy target, regardless of what they think. Half-hearted, tongue-in-cheek apologies notwithstandinding, we are not appeased by rap moguls' pronouncements of 'understanding.' Absolutely not! This is racism. We won't stand for it."

Simmons has since agreed to participate in a roundtable discussion on racism in the Hip-Hop community alongside other entertainment industry executives, artists, activists and politicians.

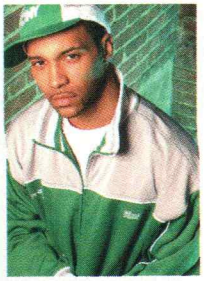
CLAP BACK

Representatives of the Hip-Hop nation sound off on Eminem and racism

MACK 10: "White dudes can't say [nigger], especially if they're saying it in a negative way. If he's saying, 'That's my nigga,' that's different. But if you're saying it in a negative way, I'ma think that shit is racist. Then rap and everything go out the window."

CROOKED I: "I think the dude is an incredible lyricist, but if you're a racist, you get no support. If we support a racist, we cutting our own throat. If he's racist like that, he gotta fall to the side. I want to see him on TV publicly apologize to Black women."

SKILLZ: "If you say the word 'nigger' out of anger and frustration and call a girl a Black bitch, I'm pretty sure you'll say it again. I don't think it's not a word he hasn't used since then. Bottom line is I don't appreciate Eminem using the word nigger. As soon as I read his statement, I knew something was fishy. He said he was dating a girl who was 'African American'! I've never heard him use the term 'African American' in his whole life, which made the whole statement look suspect to me. It's the classic example of someone getting caught and being outta character when they try to explain themselves. It all sounds the same. Sorta like his beats"



JOE BUDDEN: "I don't know what the f**k is wrong with him. I love Black women. You almost really do want to believe him, but that type of attitude really can't be excused. I don't care how old you were. I don't really know if it will affect his career, but I think he should apologize. I just hope he doesn't have those same views today."

FREDDIE FOXXX: "The bottom line is this: The fact that Eminem is White doesn't have any reflection on him being a dope MC. But he's definitely equivalent to Elvis Presley in a sense that Elvis only thought that Black people were good enough to either be his servant, or anything in a type of servitude for him. His goal is to do better than the people he stole from. At the end of the day, what else do you expect from a White man? I'm sure he used the N-word a whole lot of times outside of this."

STYLES P: "His fucking teeth should have been knocked out—that's my reaction. But all the Black people who are sucking his cock should be ashamed of themselves. If it was a Black nigga, they would have killed his ass. I can't say something too wrong 'cause he on my label. If he apologizes, it'll be aiight. If not, that's fucked up."

PAUL WALL : "If he made it as a racist song, then hell yeah he's wrong for it. That's very stereotypical for him to say that all Black girls want your money. That's like saying all gay people got AIDS. If he don't want to date Black girls, that's cool with me. That's just more for me. He wrong for it, but he wrong for most of the shit he do."

BUN B (UGK): "When did he realize he was wrong for saying that? When he got caught? It's no way that song should have been still out there like that. Nobody should have gotten a copy of that. If he didn't want nobody to hear it, he should have never put it on record, he had 10 years to find that tape."

KILLER MIKE : "This is a Black and Latino culture and art form. If you're not sensitive to that, then your card is gonna be pulled. I haven't heard the song, but I'm not in favor of White men bashing Black women. I don't think people are gonna tolerate that."

PETEY PABLO: "It's a shocking situation 'cause he's always been a great MC to me and for this to be the case, he's like Elvis. I don't think you can really apologize for that because if you call me a nigger, then to me, that's always on your mind and that's what you think about us and that's the way you look at me."

DR. MICHAEL ERIC DYSON (UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA): "Eminem certainly needs to apologize—not just offer the excuse of his youth to deny the racist beliefs that abound. Even if he was just 'blowing off steam' as an angry kid, why resort to racist lyrics to denigrate his former girlfriend? His explanation fails to acknowledge the hurtful beliefs that have prevailed for centuries, beliefs that he appropriated and circulated through his lyrics. Further, he has refused to admit that such poisonous beliefs are a threat to the very music he loves, and also to the people who have been responsible for creating the culture he has benefited from, making him wealthy by his own admission."

MALIK SHABAZZ (NEW BLACK PANTHER PARTY): "There's clearly two standards for Black and White celebrity figures when it comes to acts they have done or allegedly committed. ... You have Michael Jackson allegedly molesting children and he's being attacked with the full force of every media in the country. ... You have Kobe Bryant in the same situation, but with Eminem—who is on *tape* making racist comments that reveal what he feels about Black people—everything is being suppressed.... He can't be allowed to get away with a mere retraction when the evidence on him is already in.... His Black fans should remember this and it should reflect in his future record sales."

IRV GOTTI: "I'm a person who loves Black women. I been around Black women all my life, so I'm a defender of them. What bothers me more than the actual tape is his comment that he was was dating an African American woman at the time. His words are far worse than the tape. If he would have said, 'I was freestyling, I needed something to rhyme with lack itch, I didn't know what I was doing,' that's still not an excuse, but that would have been better. Knowing this is what you think of Black women—that they bitches, sluts, hos—I ain't never gonna ride with that."

ESHAM: "*8 Mile* was full of so much garbage that it was crazy. ... He's just a racist and the whole movie has racist overtones. It was fictitious and, once again, he was just using the culture and twisting it up in his own little sick way for the masses."

LAZY LAZE (M.O.P): "White America has that same programmed disdain and lack of respect for Black people, and like a battered wife, we are just supposed to excuse it. We have to stand up for ourselves and hold people accountable for their actions, whether it's Eminem, Bush or the Boston Red Sox—they wouldn't sign a Black free agent till 1992!"

CRAZY LEGS (ROCK STEADY CREW): "I feel there is a huge double standard when it come to mainstream media holding people not of color accountable for their actions. If this had been someone of color, careers would have been lost by now. What Eminem has done is something that has to be taken seriously. At the same time, I feel that as a person of color, I would like to see our own people stop treating things like what he said as something that only *we* can do and not check each other when we do it."

NIKKI GIOVANNI: "I'm not a fan of Eminem and it was a profound disappointment. He had to know that this was not acceptable and what he didn't expect is that somebody would say something to him. Eminem and the White boys who want to do rap have to grow up. You are just not allowed to be a bigot. ... It's like [Eminem] floated a balloon politically, and he wanted to see who's gonna shoot it down. Now they're putting a spin on it like, 'I'm sorry.' Somehow, young, White people seem to think they can do anything and then say 'I'm sorry.' But that doesn't get it. It just doesn't get it."

JIMMY HENCHMAN: "It would be a travesty if Eminem did not apologize to our community [of women]. As Americans, we're entitled to THE SOURCE.... As Americans, we're entitled to free speech by the first amendment."

SUGE KNIGHT (CEO, DEATH ROW RECORDS) "First off, I am definitely supporting THE SOURCE on this, because they have been representing for Hip-Hop since day one. I not only fault Eminem but the people around him, who knew about this all along—including Dr. Dre. I don't support anyone who [says they are] down with Hip-Hop and is trying to defend this racist muthafu**a. I've watched beefs go on in Hip-Hop where guys are ready to go to war with each other and hold grudges for years, but this is way worse and some people are ready to dismiss it. My mother is Black, my sister and my two daughters, so when he talks about Black women, there is no forgiving him."

STYLES P: PUBLICITY; PAUL WALL: JACK THOMPSON; BUN B: PUBLICITY; KILLER MIKE: JENNIFER SEXSON; PETEY PABLO: LONDON FEATURES; DR. IRV GOTTI: GETTY IMAGES; ESHAM: KEVIN KNIGHT; CRAZY LEGS: GETTY IMAGES; NIKKI GIOVANNI: CORBIS; SUGE KNIGHT: ROGER ERICKSON

LAST LINE

OF DEFENSE

Interview by Fahiym Ratcliffe
Photographs by Jennifer Sexsion

On a cold night at the Hangmen 3's studios in New York, Raymond "Benzino" Scott is outlining a burgeoning business idea. A couple of businessmen in suits listen intently from nearby couches as Benzino speaks about a vision that could make them some serious skrilla. His confidence, a combination of tencity and hard-knock life experiences, inspires apprehension in some and loyalty from others. Despite his contributions to the Hip-Hop industry, he as endured considerable criticism. In the latest controversy, the rapper and co-founder of THE SOURCE *is facing one of his greatest challenges yet: He's going up against rap's most successful and critically acclaimed MC, Eminem, and one of the most powerful record labels in the world, Interscope Records. But this isn't new territory for Benzino. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. And though some may not always agree with his stance, he at least has the courage to stand.*

THE SOURCE: At the press conference bringing this tape to light, the tape was not the only issue. You also had some choice words for the media.
Benzino: First and foremost, the media and how they cover Hip-Hop has a lot to do with this, and their double standard when it comes to covering Eminem. That's a major part of this. From the first battle, I took so much heat, it was like, "Okay, let's call this press conference" and I didn't want to take questions. I just wanted to show people what we had, and we wanted to see if the media was going to be responsible enough to treat this like they treat any other situation. It was almost like a challenge to the media. The point is that Eminem should be held accountable like every person of color who's held accountable by the media. The media is the new tool in destroying the Black male image. You've seen what they did to Michael Jackson, and Mike Tyson, you see what they're doing to Kobe. Anyone that we call heroes, they want to bring them down. Hip-hop battles against White supremacy and Hip-Hop is ours. If Eminem was smart, he should've entered into a dialogue with us immediately and said, "I was stupid and I'm sorry and we need to talk about this and let these 7 million White kids that are buying my record know that Hip-Hop represents the struggle of its Black and Latino founding fathers." THE SOURCE magazine represents history. When Dave [Mays] and I are gone, THE SOURCE is going to be in the archives and the history books, representing what was going on in culture. Bottom line. Hip-hop is more than entertainment. This is how we eat, breathe, how we congregate, and how we live. And now it's been stripped by a few companies who want to monopolize it and push us out of it. We gotta wake up.
Some people feel Eminem and his presence are kicking down doors for the sake of Hip-Hop. How do you feel about that?
To me, it seems like the doors are being shut, and it's the doors of the 'hood that's being shut. He's not kicking down any doors, he's shutting down the doors for the 'hood and he's not alone doing it, it's also the corporations. Where Hip-Hop was a thing of freedom of expression and against the corporate and about struggle, and the expression of struggle, they've taken that away from us. We're being told what type of songs we should make to get on the radio and what type of videos and images to show. They've snatched it from us. And in order to use their vehicles, dictate to us how we should be creative. That's terrible. So many people don't see the plain economics of the whole point I'm trying to make. Ever since Eminem came out, every artist done took a 50 percent drop in sales and they try to blame it on the Internet.

Well how come it hasn't affected him? People need to take a moment and forget all the bullshit, and look around and ask the reason why for certain things. Some people are complacent and just don't give a fuck. I feel that THE SOURCE is the last line of defense. After this, there'll be no more. Just we were the ones to bring it out: It's only right. I've been beefing on this issue for years when I was in Boston with Marky Mark and the media was trying to make him out to be some great rapper. And I'm with the RSO grindin', coming out of jail, streets, struggle, welfare, single baby-mamas, everything, and he just comes out and all of a sudden he's the greatest Boston rapper. I've been on this for years. I remember when Eminem first came out, I told Steve Stoute, "Man, this is gonna be a problem," and sure 'nuff. I remember sitting in Miami when he made the $54 million and I just got sick of it and so I made the first dis record. I couldn't take it. I had "Rock the Party," that was the biggest record of my life, so I didn't need the controversy. I actually lost my deal; they dropped me because of the controversy. Sylvia [Rhone] and it's no knock on her, but everyone is being political. I'm sure Doug [Morris] or Jimmy Iovine said something to her. For a record that got a couple thousand spins on the radio, you didn't even know my album existed. They sabotaged my project and they can turn around say, "See, he didn't sell that much records, so he must not be that good as a rapper." I don't give a fuck what nobody say, I know my skills in rap have stepped up, and producer-wise, I can hang out with the best of them as far as Hangmen 3 goes. I feel everything I've been doing up to this point is destined. If I didn't vent, who the fuck was? Niggas is doing songs with this dude. And he's not really doing songs with cats; he's turning people down. He's saying, "You know what? I'm not going to spit on your album, but I'll make a beat for you." And niggas go for that. What are you even aligning yourself with this cat for? You got niggas in your own crew that you need to be aligned with.

Some people feel the cause is noble, but they feel there's a petty agenda behind it all so they won't ride all the way.

This Eminem thing is a common ground for everybody to say, "Look, however or whatever [the problems are in Hip-Hop], we all need to look at this together as a collective." Whether you're Baptist, Nation [of Islam], Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Maxine Waters, the New Black Panther Party, Viola Plummer and the December 12th Movement, this is now common ground to stand on. If we were to do a survey to see what is the economics of young Black men in this country, Hip-Hop would probably be number one. They found a way to take that away from us because they understand hip-hop's economic power. We gotta understand what this is about. I'm from Boston, Massachusetts. Dorchester/Roxbury/Mattapan, there's no other place in the country that has controlled racism up there like Massachusetts. I know what it is. Racism is more than not liking someone based on their skin; it also affects the economics of people's lives.

Now many negative accusations have been hurled at you and Dave Mays over the years, and that fuels some critics' notions that your stance is not genuine. But you're saying, "For the moment, whatever way you may feel about us, don't look at the messengers, pay attention to the message."

If that cat [with the tape] would've came up to *XXL* with the tape, *XXL* might have hid the tape. If they went to MTV, they'd probably be like, "Hey, get outta here with that," 'cause they're making a lot of money from this Eminem shit. MTV gives you the image of the light-skinned brother around seven other white kids and probably one Asian. "Yeah, we'll let them in, but not too many of them in...." They're bringing that message through their vehicle and it's harmful to us. We got to make a certain type of video, but Eminem can make any type of video he wants. Or make any song he wants or do anything he wants, and it's okay. It's okay because they may feel, "Well, he looks like little Johnny and Sally and they identify with him, so let him do what he wants." It's going to be all right. You can rip Ja Rule and everybody else off your wall now." I'm still waiting to see how this 50 Cent thing will play out, 'cause eventually, that 50 poster will come down off White America's wall, and I don't know why he can't see that.

It appears that because of their record sales and market presence that G-Unit/Shady/Aftermath are currently winning the hearts and minds of a lot of Hip-Hop cats. How do you see that?

THE SOURCE magazine is an institution. Millions of cats are programmed to pick up THE SOURCE so it's too late (*laughs*). We've done too great of a job to fall down. We can't go nowhere. It's a wrap. Eminem is a huge situation now, but he speaks for people that have nothing to do with what I went through and still will be going through. So I got to be a voice for those people. Somebody got to be a voice. This position is not going to boost my record sales. I don't give a fuck about that. There's more to me than

"This Eminem thing is a common ground for everybody to say we all need to look at [racism] together as a collective."

record sales and there always was. I would've gave up if it was about that. It's about the people, man. It's just that these are the vehicles: radio and video that get your music to the people. These vehicles are put here for the people, now they need to work for the people. Radio stations need to be playing 25 percent of some local Hip-Hop. Eminem needs to give back some of those millions to some of these 'hoods and help some niggas that was supporting him. And I can say "niggas" because in my slang and my 'hood dictionary, nigga is my friend, my dawg. Whether it should be said, because I understand if our grandmothers take it as offensive because of what it meant back then [and that] is something we probably have to look at. And maybe one day we should stop using the word, but if anything, it shows us how big the programming has been. Maybe we as Black people have been programmed. Eventually it all comes down to us having to respect ourselves. If I look at you as my nigga, that's something positive. But White people know what that word is and what it means. They know at a young age what it stands for. And when you say "Black bitches/ I ain't with that nigger shit," "Black bad, White good," anyone can tell you what that is. A representative of *Webster's Dictionary* can tell you what it is and I'm not trying to hear that shit. But [to a degree] it's not his fault, because of what he grew up around and that culture. But then he learned how to rhyme and got with one of Hip-Hop's most influential producers, that's fine. But it's like what are you representing now? What you claim to represent and who you are is coming out. He makes references in his songs about he wants to "kill all the gangstas...." Well who's the gangstas? It got to be us. The niggas, right? And the thing with Elvis Presley, it's like, "I'm robbing all the Black people...I'm doing it again." He's telling us what he's doing. He's putting it in the songs for us. "I think I got a generation brainwashed...."

50 Cent has been saying conflicting things about THE SOURCE recently. At one moment, it's "Fuck THE SOURCE," the next he's appreciative of THE SOURCE nominating and giving him awards.

'Cause 50 respects THE SOURCE, incredibly. He was one of the artists that used to dream to be on THE SOURCE, no question. I'm pretty sure he got that SOURCE we put him on locked away or blown up somewhere. It's a respected institution. Now since it's a personal situation going on, he has to save face and say certain negative things about us. It is what it is. But as far as me and 50 is concerned, I mean he had beef with Ja, and I had beef with Em. He looked at it as "Well, if he got beef with Em..." and then of course he gets on the radio and he's hyped up and tries to be tough guy. I try not to promote physical confrontations over the air, but he goes about it a different way. That's how he built his career. I don't think he's that intelligent, but he is a good rap artist, but I wouldn't put him in my top 10 MCs. If 50 didn't sign to Shady Records, he wouldn't have gotten six million in sales. Dr. Dre and his sound, he needed an East Coast rapper. He tried to work with Rakim, but you see what he did to him. I think the timing was just right for him. 50 could've been anybody with a story behind him and got signed. For him, it's a rap beef, a magazine beef, and a funny joke beef. For me, there is no beef. I've become real close with Rule personally and if 50 wants to do physical harm to Rule, then that's when it becomes personal to me. If that's the situation, then I'm riding with Rule. That ain't got nothing to do with THE SOURCE magazine. Me and Rule, it ain't no industry shit, that's my nigga. It's ill how the path and everything has been taken, and one thing I found out is that Rule is a lot like me. He cares about his niggas, has a great heart. When you're in the public eye, you wanna save face and you say things you probably wouldn't have said if it was different circumstances. He gets festered on by so many people and it's in the public. I mean c'mon, man. Dudes are ready to beef over bumping into you, imagine being disrespected in front of millions of people on the air? It's not an easy pill to swallow sometimes. And then to be judged by so many people that have never met you in your life. Rule gives to charities; he's just a good dude. I met a lot of good dudes, and he's just one of them. I got great relationships with Ghostface, Raekwon, Mobb Deep. Scarface is my dog. Me and Mack-10 have been kicking it lately. Me and Jadakiss is cool. There was once a situation where both of our niggas got into it, but we're cool and that represents something.

"I like the fact that my son can have White friends and genuinely look at them not as White friends, but as friends. I don't think there has been a more intricate tool [than Hip-Hop] in bringing the races together."

There are a lot of Black women out there who feel what Eminem said is fucked up, but what about the brothers who rap and disrespect them all the time?

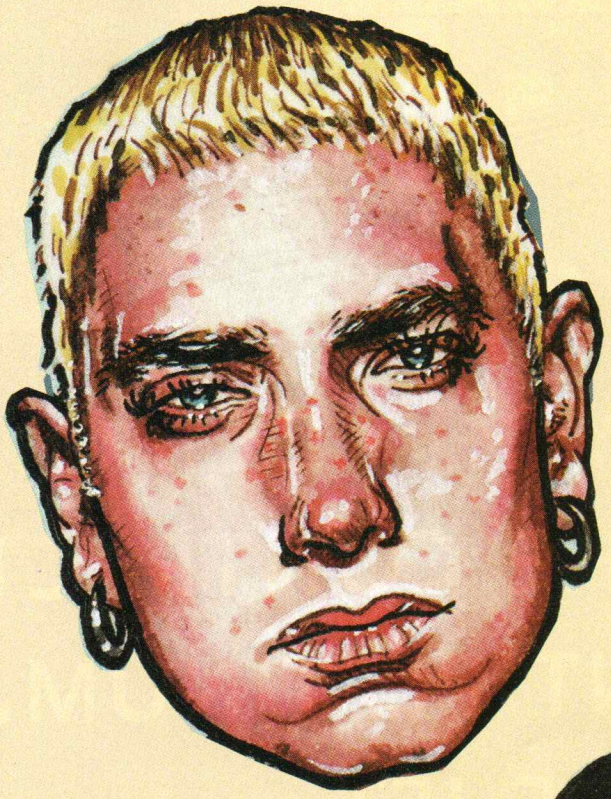
I ain't never heard no other rapper call a sister a "Black bitch" in a song. I know that in the 'hood and within our culture that is filled with no hope and struggle, that there's slang that reflects emotions. We use cuss words a lot. A lot of chicks call themselves bitches more than we call them

CONTINUED ON PAGE 97

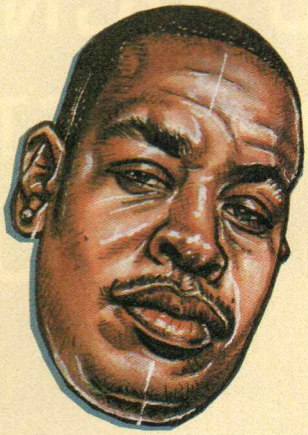
THE LAST WORD

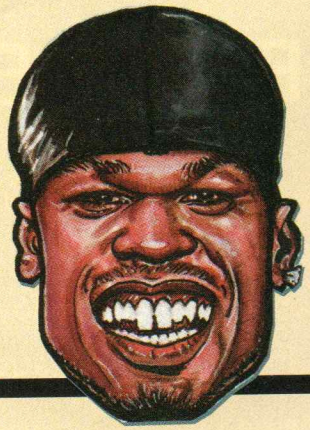
BY ANDRÉ LEROY DAVIS

RACIST?



"Of course not, some of my best friends are Ni**ers & Black Bi**hes..."





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Wake up!!!!!! Coming in March, our annual international package will celebrate Hip-Hop's diversity. Also, travel with the Haitian sensation Wyclef overseas, and join Kanye West in his search for Zion's mom. Plus, the Ruler comes back. Can we get an encore, do you want more? And after this next issue, there's gonna be another bidding war...

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